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### **LITERACY COMMITTEE**

**May 15, 2013 – 8:45 a.m. –10:00 a.m.**  
**Mercer County Community College – Kerney Campus**

**Present:** Melinna Harris (MCCC), Pat Shump, (LWD), Gay Egan (Mercer Street Friends), Scott Bollwage, (MCCC), Lynne Wise (Home Front), Tonya Coy (UIH), Peg Gould (MCCC) Paula Rossi (Princeton Y), Shirley Tyler (Dressed for Success), Duncan Harrison (UIH)

**Staff:** Beverly Mills

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#### **Review and Approval of March 20, 2013 Minutes:**

Melinna Harris, Co-Chair of the WIB Literacy Committee, opened the meeting. The minutes from the March 20, 2013 meeting were reviewed with one correction from Melinna: in the last paragraph under the Adult Consortium Update the sentence should read, "**Melinna added that MCCC has four examiners available and has added an extra Saturday however that's still not enough spaces to fill the demand.**" Lynne Wise made a motion to accept the minutes with this correction; 2<sup>nd</sup> by Peg Gould. The minutes will be placed on the Mercer County WIB website.

#### **Adult Literacy Consortium Update as of May 15, 2013:**

- FY 2013 enrollment is 870 which is 92% of the contracted goal of 949

#### **FY 2014 Funding**

- The NGO has been issued
- The Technical Assistance Meeting was held on May 6, 2013
- Mercer Consortium initially awarded \$573,792 but this may increase
- Deadline has been extended to May 31, 2013 for proposals
- There is a 2% cap to serve adults with high school diploma or equivalency
- New amounts: Level I (\$800); Level II (\$600) and Level III (\$400)
- SAGE is the new software to be used for proposal submission, tracking, contract and reporting
- MCCC is looking at dual enrollment – Consortium partners to serve lower level students

The WIB facilitated inviting potential consortium members to a special meeting regarding the NGO at MCCC. Melinna added that two additional partners want to be part of the consortium.

Melinna also mentioned that the State will probably be looking more closely at performance based contracts in the future.

There is still no answer about the new GED test; an answer most likely won't come until November. Right now the State is considering several different publishers. One of these vendors is talking about acknowledging the scores of the current GED. At this point MCCC cannot physically accommodate the number of people who want to take the GED.

Gay mentioned that people who wouldn't normally take the GED, and aren't necessarily ready to take the test, are scoring lower and then trying to sign up to re-take the exam again. People are panicking.

Beverly updated the committee on the presentation by Lanse Davis on the GED at the last full WIB meeting in April. In light of the situation, the WIB felt that a comment from the Board was warranted. Beverly advised that the Literacy Committee was also preparing a comment which will be vetted through the Communications Office. We must be clear in what we are asking for; what are the short term solutions that would help now?

Melinna said funding should be sought to hire full time examiners so testing could go on all day. Also, if the pay was increased maybe it would attract more testers. With GED testing sites closing (July 1<sup>st</sup> likely) that narrows down sites that are trying to meet demand. Committee plans to discuss a response before the end of the meeting.

### **Professional Day Re-Cap:**

Committee said the misunderstanding by Craig Jez regarding his Jobs4Jersey presentation may have impacted the feedback we received. Committee also agreed the funding presentation went well but mostly from an administrative standpoint. Each speaker did an excellent job however in the future we shall be more specific about topics since attendees are a mixed group.

Gay said she would still like a presentation of how to walk through the process for Jobs4Jersey; it's very time consuming and doesn't necessarily work well. The main issue is the time it takes to develop a resume and maintain it (written instructions would help). Shirley mentioned that "Dressed for Success" has volunteer professionals to help with resume writing. Melinna suggested a seminar at a certain site such as a library on a Saturday.

Paula Rossi mentioned the program in Princeton called Brain Fuse. Anyone with a Princeton library card can use at home for resume writing assistance, GED practice tests or help in ESL. There are costs involved but she will look into whether the Consortium would be able to qualify.

Melinna asked for topics for the next Professional Development Day (probably in October). Committee said it would be helpful to get a description of the presentation first just to make sure the presenter knows their audience.

### **Presentation by Smith & Solomon:**

Todd Hyland presented on behalf of Smith & Solomon. Points covered included:

- Smith & Solomon is a CDL training provider for Class A, B and also trains for Class B passenger busses (not school busses). They work with all One Stops and Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Cost is \$3,995 (not including fees which include a physical, drug tests); with costs are \$4,240
- Students must have a valid driver's license for one year; they don't do background checks. Some companies have become more open minded to hiring felons
- No GED required for training – must score at least 7.0 on TABE only if funded by WIA (school does not require)
- Companies will require 6-8 weeks training Monday-Thursday (7:00 AM – 5:00 PM)
- There's a job placement specialist at each campus
- Important for potential students to take care of the driver's licenses – suspensions look bad on the record
- ESL students must have a working command of English
- Over 10% of students are female
- Can make \$35,000 - \$40,000 for over the road drivers (potential to earn more)
- Regional drivers can make around \$30,000 - \$35,000
- Class A driver make \$16.00 per hour and Class B \$13.00
- No financial aid or Pell – Smith & Solomon offers interest free loans but must have a credit score of at least 610. Will allow 12 – 15 months to pay off

### **GED Response:**

Gay Egan volunteered to draft a response based on immediate need. We should focus our comments around Mercer County statistics and level of need. There's a need for more examiners and materials (\$40.00 per set but are restricted to 15); as well as other costs. There are only two sites in Mercer County. Can the sites stay open longer; can they do testing in the evening? Can Lawrence open their site? The committee agreed the immediate need is for more examiners and longer hours at testing sites.

### **Identification of Literacy Needs in Mercer County:**

To fulfill the requirements of the grant, the WIB facilitated a meeting of potential consortium members. As a follow up the committee brainstormed and identified literacy needs as the following:

- ESL (not literate in first language)
- GED
- ABE
- Civics
- Accommodating Special Learning Needs
- Basic Components Instruction
- Numeracy
- Critical thinking or reasoning skills
- Knowledge of Community Resources
- Job Search
- Access to Services (transportation)
- Additional access to GED testing opportunities

- Brush Up for H.S. Grads
- Access to testing, strategy and training for people with learning disabilities
- Flexible schedules
- Coordination of Curriculum (sharing/collaborating)
- Transitioning to post-secondary opportunities

Paula will ask NAMI for a reference for the name of a Learning Disabilities Teaching Consultant. Melinna agreed; there's a need for a pre-screening tool.

Committee agreed that there would not be a Professional Development Day in June as originally planned. We will also change the evaluation format for the next session.

**Next Literacy Committee Meeting: Wednesday, June 19, 2013**